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**Question: “Does anxiety as well GAD make you feel sick all day like you’re going to pass out or going to vomit or have a heart attack and does it cause chest pain all day and headaches?”**

**Answer:** If these are your symptoms then your first step should be getting checked out by a medical doctor. Once a physical check-up rules out a physical cause then the rest of this installment is relevant.

An abundance of research on anxiety and panic attacks demonstrates that such related symptoms can bring on or contribute to many physical issues such as vomiting or pain in the chest, headaches, other pains, heaviness in chest, nausea, etc.

Not everyone who has anxiety or panic attacks experiences such symptoms but it can be reassuring to know that they can be related to anxiety.

Even famous actors have discussed the anxiety they experience before going on stage, some even have diarrhea. These people have situational anxiety but, again, I think it’s reassuring that many people get these symptoms even those who do not have panic attacks.

The key though is that the non-anxiety sufferer works through these symptoms or merely lets them pass. Through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) you too can learn to no longer be immobilized by them. I have discussed Cognitive Therapy before, but for those who need a quick refresher on what CBT is, in relation to anxiety, here we go:

CBT is a process whereby the anxiety sufferer analyzes his/her thoughts to locate the Cognitive Distortions present. These Cognitive Distortions cause our emotions and thus symptoms of anxiety. Cognitive Distortions are errors in one’s thinking. Once these distortions are located, a healthier thought can be substituted in their place so that you can start to feel better.

**A list of Cognitive Distortions is presented at the last part of this installment.**

I would encourage you to go through the below example with me and then look try to apply this process to your own thoughts by, again, using the list at the end of this installment.

Let’s say that we have the thought that we might be having a heart attack and we might get nauseas.

We then need to consult the list of Cognitive Distortions below and locate the distortion. You need to have a pen and paper handy to write down everything – this is extremely helpful.

Well, having consulted the list I see that there is some “fortune telling” going on and also “disqualifying the positive.” Now right these down.

Okay, now that the distortions have been located, you need to locate a healthier more realistic thought. If you think about it, there have probably been other times when we've had these feeling and did not either get sick or, worse yet, have a heart attack.

You might write down that you can think of other times in your life when you didn't have heart attack or vomit despite feeling you would. You can actually go on to write more than that, but I think you probably get the idea now. You should start to feel better once you work through your thoughts every time they come up.

Please note, though, the process won't be instant; it does take work. In future installments, we will look at more examples using the list of Cognitive Distortions.

#### Cognitive Distortions

1. All-or-nothing thinking - Thinking of things in absolute terms, like "always", "every" or "never". Few aspects of human behavior are so absolute.
2. Overgeneralization - Taking isolated cases and using them to make wide generalizations.
3. Mental filter - Focusing exclusively on certain, usually negative or upsetting, aspects of something while ignoring the rest, like a tiny imperfection in a piece of clothing.
4. Disqualifying the positive - Continually "shooting down" positive experiences for arbitrary, ad hoc reasons.
5. Jumping to conclusions - Assuming something negative where there is no evidence to support it. Two specific subtypes are also identified:  
Mind reading - Assuming the intentions of others.  
Fortune telling - Predicting how things will turn before they happen.
6. Magnification and Minimization - Inappropriately understating or exaggerating the way people or situations truly are. Often the positive characteristics of other people are exaggerated and negative characteristics are understated. There is one subtype of magnification:  
Catastrophizing - Focusing on the worst possible outcome, however unlikely, or thinking that a situation is unbearable or impossible when it is really just uncomfortable.
7. Emotional reasoning - Making decisions and arguments based on how you feel rather than objective reality.
8. Making should statements - Concentrating on what you think "should" or ought to be rather than the actual situation you are faced with, or having rigid rules which you think should always apply no matter what the circumstances are. Albert Ellis termed this "Musterbation."
9. Labeling - Explaining behaviors or events, merely by naming them; related to overgeneralization. Rather than describing the specific behavior, you assign a label to someone or yourself that puts them in absolute and unalterable terms.
10. Personalization (or attribution) - Assuming you or others directly caused things when that may not have been the case. When applied to others this is an example of blame.

Cognitive distortion. (2008, July 9). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 00:08, July 15, 2008, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cognitive\\_distortion&oldid=224669620](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cognitive_distortion&oldid=224669620)

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